

**MUSLIM SOCIETY OF THAILAND:
A STUDY OF ISLAMIC RESURGENCE IN THE
GLOBALISATION ERA**

by

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NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION AND REFERENCING

1. Romanisation of Arabic

For Arabic words and names, the present thesis uses the system of transliteration laid down by Library of Congress.¹ The general rules are as follows:

Consonants:

Romanisation	Consonant	Romanisation	Consonant
ḍ	ض	ʾ, ā	ا
ṭ	ط	b	ب
ẓ	ظ	t	ت
ʿ	ع	th	ث
gh	غ	j	ج
f	ف	ḥ	ح
q	ق	kh	خ
k	ك	d	د
l	ل	dh	ذ
m	م	r	ر
n	ن	z	ز
h	هـ	s	س
w, ū	و	sh	ش
y, ī	ي	ṣ	ص

Vowels and Diphthongs:

á	اَ	ā	اَ	a	اَ
ay	اَي	ī	يَ	i	يَ
aw	اَوْ	ū	وُ	u	وُ

1. Library of Congress, "Romanization of Arabic" (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1997), <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsd/romanization/arabic.pdf>.

- 1.1 Hyphen is used to connect the definite article (ال) with the word that follows.
- 1.2 The definite article (ال) is always Romanised *al-*, whether is it followed by a ‘sun letter’ (*al-hurūf al-shamsīyah*). An exception is the preposition (لِ) followed by the article: *lil-*, e.g. للظالمين *lil-zālimīn*.
- 1.3 *Hamzah* (ا) is omitted at the beginning of a word; elsewhere, it is Romanised ’, e.g. أحمد *Aḥmad*, but مؤسسة *mu’assasah*, دائم *dā’im*, and خاطيء *khāṭī’*.
- 1.4 *Tā’ al-Marbūṭah* (ة): For a word in the construct state (*iḍāfah*), it is Romanised *t*, e.g. وزارة التربية *Wizārat al-Tarbiyah*; in an indefinite noun or adjective or proceeded by the definite article: *h*, e.g. الرسالة الإلهية *al-risālah al-ilāhiyah*.
- 1.5 ابن and بن are both Romanised *ibn*, except in modern names, typically North African, in which بن is Romanised *bin*.
- 1.6 *Shaddah* (ّ) is Romanised by doubling the letter.
- 1.7 Medial يّ representing the combination of long vowel plus consonant, is Romanised *īy*; final يّ is Romanised *ī*, e.g. القومية *al-qawmīyyah* and الشيعي *al-Shī’ī*.
- 1.8 In this thesis, Arabic words which are commonly used in Standard English are neither Romanised nor italicised, e.g. the Holy Qur’an, Islam, Muslim.

2. Romanisation of Thai

2.1 Thai words in general are Romanised according to the standard proposed by The Royal Institute.² The general rules are as follows:

2.1.1 Thai words are Romanised on the basis of transcription whereby the sounds are noted by the system of signs of Roman alphabet, regardless of original spelling, e.g. จันทร์ = *chan*, พระ = *phra*, and แก้ว = *kaeo*.

2.1.2 Each word is written separately, e.g. สถาบันไทยคดีศึกษา = Sathaban Thai Khadi Sueksa, ห้างแก้วฟ้า = Hang Kaeo Fa, ถนนโชคชัย = Thanon Chok Chai.

2.1.3 The initial character of the proper nouns and that of the preceding titles are capitalised, e.g. นายปรีดา อยู่เย็น = Nai Prida Yuyen, เด็กหญิงอุ้มบุญ ทองมี = Dekying Umbun Thongmi, จังหวัดกำแพงเพชร = Changwat Kamphaeng Phet.

2.2 However, proper names and words derived from foreign languages are Romanised on the basis of popularity of usage, e.g. Islam (not *Itsalam*), Muslim (not *Mutsalim*), Kulsirisawad (not Kunsirisawat). It is because pronunciation-based Romanisation often fails to keep proper nouns in its correct form of fragmentation, e.g. Naphakorn (not Na Pha Kon), Saowanee (not Sao Wa Nee).

2.The Royal Institute. *Principles of Romanization for Thai Script by Transcription Method* (Bangkok: The Royal Institute, 1999).

2.3 Thai phrases which refer to proper names, names of persons, places and institutions are not italicised, e.g. King Narai, Ayutthaya, Prince of Songkla University.

3. Referencing Style

References use the footnote system according to Turabian style, 6th Edition, starting with the name of the author and then followed in order by the title of the work, the place of the publication, the name of the publisher, the date of publishing, and page number. The three elements before the last are given in brackets. In the text, the note reference follows the passage to which it refers and is marked with an Arabic numeral typed slightly above the line (superscript). Notes are arranged numerically at the foot of the page. Notes include complete bibliographic information when cited for the first time. Reference to a work that has already been cited in full form, but with intervening references, uses the author's last name, a shortened title of book and page.³

3. Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

MASYARAKAT MUSLIM DI THAILAND: SATU KAJIAN TENTANG KEBANGKITAN ISLAM DALAM ERA GLOBALISASI

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengkaji tentang masyarakat Muslim di Thailand dalam konteks Kebangkitan Islam peringkat global. Pengaji meneliti tentang sejarah latar belakang masyarakat Muslim di Bangkok dan Selatan Thailand, menyelidik tentang Kebangkitan Islam dengan mengfokuskan kepada masyarakat sivil Muslim di Thailand dan perkembangan perasaan kesedaran Islam yang terpengaruh dari masyarakat Muslim di luar negara.

Kebangkitan Islam di Thailand ialah satu bahagian daripada proses Kebangkitan Islam peringkat global yang muncul dalam keadaan globalisasi. Dalam pada itu, globalisasi juga berhubungan akrab dengan kebangkitan perasaan kesedaran Islam, ia sebagai satu faktor yang menekan perasaan kesedaran Islam supaya makin cepat dimunculkan. Setelah Kebangkitan Islam tersebar di seluruh masyarakat Muslim maka telah membuktikan tren globalisasi yang jelas terhadap dunia Muslim terkini, iaitu Kebangkitan Islam peringkat global.

Walaupun masyarakat Muslim di Bangkok dan Selatan Thailand berlainan evolusinya tetapi kedua dua masyarakat telah menerima kesan positif yang sama dari Kebangkitan Islam. Mereka menemui cara pembangunan semula identiti Islam melalui perasaan kesedaran Islam. Dunia globalisasi mengizinkan pewujudan jaringan dan hubungan antara pelbagai aliran pemikiran pembaharuan ideologi spektrum. Oleh demikian, asas ajaran Islam di Thailand dibentuk daripada beberapa aliran pemikiran pembaharuan Islam iaitu Salafi, Tablighi Jama'at, dan Shiah.

Aliran tersebut berkesan daripada pengaliran fikiran pembaharuan Islam terkini yang mempunyai sifat yang berlainan.

Berkaitan dengan hubungan dialektik antara pelbagai pemikiran tersebut, membawa masyarakat Muslim di Thailand ke arah berperasaan kesedaran Islam dan membina keilmuan Islam yang terlebih tinggi melalui aktiviti penyebaran pemikiran yang dilaksanakan oleh masyarakat sivil Muslim. Walaubagaimanapun, dalam proses tersebut masih juga didapati pertempuran dan polemik tetapi tidak dianggap sebagai faktor yang menahan kemunduran secara langsung dalam perkembangan Kebangkitan Islam tetapi ia hanya sebagai manifestasi dinamik masyarakat Muslim sahaja.

MUSLIM SOCIETY OF THAILAND: A STUDY OF ISLAMIC RESURGENCE IN THE GLOBALISATION ERA

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to understand Muslim society of Thailand in the context of global Islamic resurgence. It investigates the historical background of Muslim society in Bangkok and the Deep South, and examines Islamic resurgence with a focus on the growth of transnational Islamic consciousness and Muslim civil society in Thailand.

Islamic resurgence in Thailand is part of the larger process of global Islamic resurgence which emerged under the conditions of globalisation. Globalisation has intimate relations with the rise of Islamic consciousness. It accelerates the growth of Islamic consciousness to dramatic rapidity and Islamic resurgence that extends its reach throughout the world produces a globalising trend, that is, the global Islamic resurgence.

Although the evolutionary paths of Muslim society in Bangkok and that in the Deep South are different, they both enjoy the benefits of Islamic resurgence. Muslim society of Thailand finds the way to reconstructing Islamic identity with Islamic consciousness. Globalisation enables a variety of reformist ideas to interact and revitalise. Therefore, Islamic traditions in Thailand are reshaped by Islamic ideologies of reform, consisting of Salafī, Tablīghī Jamā‘at, and Shī‘ah. These tendencies are the consequence of the influx of current Islamic reformist currents which have developed with different characters.

The dialectical relations among those ideas move the Muslim society of Thailand towards increasing Islamic consciousness and development of Islamic intellectualism through propagation activities by Muslim civil society. Although clashes and polemics may occur in the process, they do not permanently set back the growth of Islamic consciousness. Rather, they are merely manifestations of the dynamics in Muslim society.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the framework of the study, including background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, research methodology, review of related literature, definition of terminology, and organisation of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

The consequences of “modernity” nowadays are being felt more all over the world than before. The dimensions of modernity that are frequently perceived as desirable changes, amongst others, are modern technologies, rationality of minds, high education, promotion of rights, free trade and independent competitive markets, accessible communication and so forth. Although the process of modernisation has begun since the seventeenth century, the Muslim world remained for the most parts traditional and did not feel the full impact of modernism until a century ago.⁴

As a result of the repercussions of intellectual liberation, schools of philosophy and modern thought produced many contesting ideologies, such as democracy and communism in politics, and capitalism and Marxism in economics. Consequently, numerous sets of policies were designed and implemented to gain control of the entire world. Despite differences in details, all those ideologies had

4. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (London: W& J Mackay Limited, 1975).

something in common, that is, the aim to remove indigenous traditions with the claim that they inflicted underdevelopment and backwardness upon societies. Democracy and capitalism became the prevalent discourses among the developed countries. Such new experiences as nation-state, democratisation, and industrialisation as well as modern styles of dress, Western courtesy and mannerism were introduced to the other parts of the world to be adopted willingly or unwillingly.

In the aftermath of decolonisation, the West's domination over the rest of the world remained discernible, not in forms of territorial occupation, but in the guise of modern lifestyle. World cultures have been virtually homogenised by the heavy storm of Western norms and lifestyles imposed through the entertainment industry which wields overwhelming influence on people from all walks of life.

When humanity — separated by distance, language, and religion — had become a global family owing to the advanced technology of communication, cultural gap was recognised as the main factor that had perpetuated the symptom of westoxication in the third world countries. Religion re-emerged as an influential factor and played a key role in either intensifying the conflict or finding an appropriate solution of the contemporary challenges. Consequently, religion was once again reinstated in the name of pluralism. Ironically, secularism, classically conceived as a set of beliefs that is hostile to the religious domain, was redefined as mutual respect for all religions.⁵ Others define secularism as a device seeking to protect religion from the corruption of politics on one hand and to safeguard politics

5. Yoginder Sikand, "Asghar Ali Engineer's Quest for an Islamic Theology of Peace and Religious Pluralism," December 30, 2007, <http://muslimwakeup.com>

from being exploited by religion on the other hand.⁶ This would be a sufficient explanation of the way in which globalisation has brought about an opportunity for religions.

The unjust world resulting from American hegemony over global politics, global economy, and global culture as illustrated in the phrase ‘unipolar world’⁷ has hastened the growth of Islamic civilisation in dramatic speed. The increasing number of Muslim immigrants and converts to Islam in the West became central to American policymakers’ concern. The tension between Islamists and the West developed along with the passage of time until it reached to the turning-point of modern world history, i.e. when anger, outrage and despair prompted the terrorists’ assaults on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001.

Since that time, the global village has been affected by Islamophobia, the irrational fear of Islam that leads to prejudice and discrimination against Muslims. The catchword ‘terrorism’ is intertwined closely with Islam and popularised through the mainstream media to demonise those who uphold its signs as a real threat to global security. Nonetheless, despite the one-sided information delivered by the mainstream media, it is evident that Islam is gaining more interest on a global scale, particularly from non-Muslims. Literature related to Islam and Muslims in controversial issues is always sold out shortly after their publication. That is partly because oppressive operations of some Western regimes against Muslim countries

6. M.A. Muqtadar Khan, “The Myth of Secularism: Religion and Politics are Mutually Constitutive,” *Ijtihad: A Return to Enlightenment*, 2004, <http://www.ijtihad.org/Secularism.htm>

7. Dr Chandra Muzaffar, president of International Movement for a Just World, interestingly combines the relationship of civilisations with the relationship of their power in his essay titled “A Unipolar World: The Politics of Resistance and Transformation,” in *New Visions for Peace* (Bangkok: Asian Muslim Action Network, 2004), describing the world dominated by the United States as a unipolar world.

triggered the consciousness of those who earnestly espouse the notion of human rights and turned them on to search for truth and justice. Overall, the entire world seems to feel ambivalent about the nature of the religion of Islam and Muslims.

Taking the present-day Muslim *ummah* against the backdrop of the global experiences, one finds no difficulty to recognise that Muslim societies are invariably seeking in Islam for defensive power and spiritual integrity in the face of challenges the globalised world has posed to them. They draw inspiration from the failure of modernity to make justice, equity, and sustainability a reality. They thus opt to bring Islam to the public life and put its teachings into practice, not to be confined to personal piety nor remain non-functional in the books. The awakening of Islamic consciousness in a certain country often hits the headlines and attracts the attention of academic circles from time to time.

However, it is noteworthy that the Islamic movements that have developed throughout various different societies are diverse phenomena, inescapably formed by differences in historical background, cultural milieu, religious roots, political experience, and demographic importance. That is probably due to the dynamics of Muslim society that lie in the endless interaction between political aspiration and spiritual needs⁸. It is a complex mechanism of struggle for survival in the globalised existence that has prompted the recent upsurge of Islamic consciousness. With numerous factors shaping the religious life of Muslim society and determining the

8. Professor Fazlur Rahman subtly suggests in his reflection on Islamic revival's evolution in the medieval period that the emergence of reforms in most cases results from the attempt to strike the balance between spiritual passivity and political motives. He puts, "It is of capital importance to understand the role of both these factors: the political and the spiritual in Islam in order adequately to appreciate the rise and nature of fundamentalist reform. For indeed fundamentalist developments are essentially reactions against both factors and seek to eradicate or seriously modify Sufi spirituality and drastically reform politics." See Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam* (London: Oneworld, 2000).

direction they are heading, Islamic resurgence is manifesting itself in every corner of the world as people are expressing Islam in a myriad, sometimes contradictory, approaches.

Though being peripheral to the Muslim world, Muslims in Thailand are inescapably affected somehow by major changes in other countries. The healthy upsurge of Islamic consciousness in the Muslim countries definitely involves impact on the evolution of Muslim society throughout the world. Globalisation even makes it easier and faster to reach the enclave of Muslims in Thailand.

In relation to the Muslim population in Thailand, it can be divided roughly into two communities: one in Bangkok and the other in the Deep South. Thai Muslims who reside in the Buddhist surroundings of Bangkok have undergone the process of integration. Due to residual conditions caused by socio-economic transformation in the capital city, the contemporary generation of Muslims in Bangkok are totally assimilated to be 'Thai' in cultural terms. For the Muslims of Bangkok who are perpetually shaped by the Thai mainstream, ethnicity does not constitute crucial behavioural strategy for sustaining their existence, unlike other Muslim communities living in other parts of the country.⁹ Their concern is about the ways to maintain their identity of religious reality through the practice of Islamic essential rituals without any interference. Heretical rituals performed by men of Islamic traditions were commonly conducted in order to identify Muslim individuals as belonging to Islam and differentiating the Muslim community from their Buddhist counterpart. As the process of modernisation commenced and took effect, Thai

9. Raymond Scupin, "Thai Muslims in Bangkok: Islam and Modernisation in a Buddhist Society" (University of California, Anthropology, 1978), vii.

people, definitely including Muslims, thrived on its educational and economic impacts. While education reforms made them more rational and profound, the economic growth opened for them a new window of opportunity to acquire Islamic knowledge from Middle Eastern countries.

Nonetheless, a factionalising conflict between the reformists (*khana mai*) and the conservatives (*khana kao*) emerged as a by-product. Patterns of beliefs and rituals were continuously being modified within the globalising context of Bangkok. Cataclysm of reformist ideology, contributed largely by Salafī that was institutionalised in the nineteenth-century Saudi Arabia in an attempt to purify folk Islam from other influences, caused a series of change in the Muslim way of life.¹⁰ Shī'ī ideology, imported from post-revolutionary Iran, reinforced the ongoing conflict to be swifter. Reformist movements having roots in South Asia such as Tablīghī Jamā'at and Qādiyānīyyah took part in making the society more colourful and complex.

In exploring the underlying causes that helped create the dilemma, it is reasonable to assume that the aspiration to take up a leading role as assumed previously by Muslim aristocrats in the past has manifested itself in the ideological struggle within Muslim society by using the people's loyalty and keenness for the religion to realise it. It is not only the opportunity to spread the knowledge of Islamic teachings and improve collective piety for God that the contest of different versions of Islamic reading has brought about, but also the risks of the society being torn and fragmented into conflicting factions, plagued with bigotry and fanaticism, and

10. Scupin, "Thai Muslims in Bangkok: Islam and Modernisation in a Buddhist Society", 91-95.

eventually posing a serious threat to the communal peace and harmony.

Simultaneously, Muslims in the Deep South suffer another fate which is more complex in nature. As attention is drawn on to the Muslims in the southernmost provinces of Thailand, one will find out that in addressing the threatening loss of the key features of their culture like Malay language and Islamic faith by the direct rule of Thai authority, they opted to preserve their identity with *pondok* playing a pivotal role in providing religious guidelines and serving as a reference for the community in all important matters. It was the centre where the youth were sent to have training in Islamic knowledge, and equipped with Malay-Islamic way of life in the hope that their ethno-cultural identity would remain intact. The religious domain received greater importance as people took refuge in Islam and religious scholars from the fear of changing situation. Despite their endeavours to avoid conflict, history witnessed resistance and uprisings led by Muslim religious teachers in the Deep South against Thai authority following several sets of policies implemented to place ‘Thainess’ — a term traditionally laden with Thai ethnicity and Buddhism — in the realm of Malay Muslim identity.¹¹

Significance of the matter lies in that Islam has been associated with those conflicts in one way or another along the course of regional history. Among others, Haji Sulong’s initiative¹² to hand over a proposal for the reform of Islamic education

11. Norman Vasu, “Thailand’s Restive South: Time to Acknowledge the Multiplicity of Thai-ness,” *IDSS Commentary*, 2005.

12. Haji Sulong bin Abdul Kadir (1895-1954) is the first chairman of Pattani Provincial Council for Islamic Affairs. In 1947, he led a petition campaign for autonomy, language and cultural rights for Malay Muslims, and implementation of Islamic law in the Deep South. His movement resulted in his arrest of treason charges in 1948 and his subsequent presumed murder by the authority of Phibun’s government in 1954. See further Thanet Aphornsuvan, *Khwa Pen Ma Khong Thruesai Baengyaek Din Daeng Nai Phaktai Thai (The History of the Separatist Theory in Southern Thailand)* (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 2006), 54-60.

in the area, as at that time it was conducted in a traditional pattern, to be more progressive yet remain under local administration, is a notable example of the struggle to maintain their cultural heritage. Since state-run schools were viewed as the agents of ‘cultural manipulation’ and ‘Siamisation’ of the Malay Muslims, violent attacks were targeted at schools and educational staff although the victims proved to be innocent civilians. Cold-blooded assaults on non-Muslims, such as drive-by shooting, slitting their throats with machetes, or burning their houses to the ground, were committed as actions inspired, at best, or justified at worst, by Islam. Series of attacks against Muslim civil servants who were regarded as close allies of the Thai authority put the whole society into the climate of fear.

The reassertion of Islam in the motherlands of Islamic civilisation seemed to make the situation in the local context of Muslim South more complex and far-reaching. While Muslim intellectuals were moving ahead to bring Islamic education to the forefront of problem-solving strategies, Islam was harnessed by unidentified groups to justify the segregationist ends, mobilise naïve proponents, and cover up the militant operations. Struggle for the course of justice turned nasty when means were separated from ends. Restive Southern Thailand reached a new height in the intensity of violence against the backdrop of modern Islamic education’s prosperity. Given this predicament, it could be said that Islamic resurgence had not only heightened Muslims’ awareness of religious devotion, but a sense of belonging to the Malay origins has also come to benefit from the changing place of Islam in the local context. In other words, identity politics erupted into the ongoing unrest at the same time when the people of the Deep South were enjoying the rapid growth of Islamic consciousness on a larger scale.

Presently, Islamic traditions are being communicated to the masses by vigorous propagation movements with selective readings of the sacred text, resulting in a wide spectrum of varied faces of Islam, including puritanical Salafī, apolitical missionary Tablīghī Jamā‘at, theocratic Iranian Shī‘ah, conservative Sunnī and the modernist tendency. Muslim societies are living in a dilemma of competing ideologies which offer different approaches to achieving the ideal human society, the one in which their life thrives in piety, integrity, justice, and well-being. Unfortunately, they are being engulfed into the whirlpool of conflict where strong currents of Islamic revivalism swirl and eddy around. As the faith-derived power is immense and far-reaching, misrepresentation of Islamic concepts potentially bring devastating effects to all. When it is mobilised for an approved course of action, successful transformations for a sustainable tomorrow is possible to be played out by the same token.

Our problem lies in the means of magnifying the Muslim society of Thailand in the wake of the growing Islamic resurgence in the globalisation era. As a local-born researcher, I observed that while Islam is gaining a greater role in the public life of Thai society, Muslims tend to be more expressive of Islam in several aggressive ways reflecting the negative, exclusivist, and uncompromising image of Islam. They see the growing consciousness of Islamic piety as the triumph of religion over the secular establishment. In contrast, negative opinions about Islam and Muslims are posted by non-Muslims in many online forums to represent their attitude and convey a sense of disapproval to the public. Although Islam as one of the moral systems that potentially bring about peace and serenity is supposed to be welcomed, people are increasingly discouraged from Islam by some Muslims’ fanatical expression of their faith. These contrasting pictures of Islam in Thailand reflect the similar problem in

the global context.

Amidst ambivalence and confusion about its nature and future trend, Mālik Bennabī, a Tunisian eminent scholar and authority on civilisation studies, guides those who are finding the answer to such a question. In addressing the problems faced by the Muslim world, he gives remarkable attention to a holistic approach to making out the root cause of the problems as shown in his *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah*, stating that:

إن مشكلة كل شعب هي في جوهرها مشكلة حضارته، ولا يمكن لشعب أن يفهم
أو يحل مشكلته ما لم يرتفع بفكرته إلى الأحداث الإنسانية، وما لم يتعمق في فهم
العوامل التي تبني الحضارات أو تهدمها... (شروط النهضة ١٩٨٦م، ص ١٩)

Every nation's problem is, in essence, the problem of her civilisation. Any nation cannot [fully] comprehend their problem as long as they do not elevate their awareness to [the level of] human calamities nor do they profoundly understand the factors that contribute to the making and fall of civilisations.¹³

According to the above-quoted statement, Bennabī argues that the right way to look at any problem of our society is to consider it as a single complete unit, not to break it down into different aspects such as political, economic, or ethical. Since attempts to encounter the problem by addressing those aspects in isolation are as virtually futile as the medical treatment dealing with the symptoms of the disease, not with the root cause. It is those facets forming the framework of human life in a well-organised order that Bennabī calls “civilisation”. In this regard, the prerequisite for tackling the problem is to look beyond the boundaries of geo-political,

13. Malik Bennabi, *Shurūṭ al-Nahḍah, Mushkilāt al-Ḥaḍārah* (Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr, 1986), 19. Translation from the Arabic text is mine.

ideological, and cultural divides, considering it as the problem of humanity at large. A problem is linked to another as the different symptoms of the same disease that is inflicting the humanity in different parts of the world with different conditions.

In addition, Bennabī stipulates that one must take into account the dynamics of human society in creating and destroying civilisations so that one can achieve the realistic insight into the matter of particular concern. It means that any societal phenomenon needs to be probed and treated as a portion of the cycle of civilisation which grandeur and decadence depends on several factors. One must envisage a particular circumstance as representing a manifestation of civilisational development which is composed of stages. In other words, in order to figure out the problem that plagues human society, one must refer to the factors that contribute to or hinder the growth of civilisation, or even lead to its eventual demise. The concept of evolution in civilisation as the grand framework of human well-being provides a clear-cut concept of the impact of a certain phenomenon on the growth of civilisation. It projects the image of the effects of such symptoms on the development of human security and prosperity.

In this case, the problem that we are trying to focus on is the upsurge of Islamic consciousness in Muslim society of Thailand. In light of Bennabī's guidelines, we learned that the crux of the problem is the same — notwithstanding elemental diversity, discrepancy of historical background, and several other differences in its outward details. We also learned that any change must affect the trajectory of civilisation in some ways. Therefore, we have come up with the following questions in mind: Where does the crux of the problem lie? Is the Islamic resurgence that is taking place in Thailand responsible for the ideological infighting,

divisiveness, and moral lethargy as well as the use of violence in the name of Islam? Does Islamic resurgence in Thailand set back or contribute to the growth of Islamic civilisation? Our ultimate question is: In the wake of globalisation, where is the position of present-day Muslim society of Thailand in civilisational terms and where are they moving towards? We will try to find answers to these questions that will best fulfil our endless curiosity through empirical evidences and rigorous analyses.

1.2 Problem Statement

The problem in the present study is our ambivalence on the rise of Islamic consciousness in the Muslim society of Thailand. It is ideally perceived that Islamic resurgence is transforming the existing society into an ideal pious one, functioning within and beyond the nation-state boundaries, thereby rebuilding Muslim identity on both local and global scales. In contrast, the rise of Islamic consciousness in the Muslim society of Thailand seems to be conducive to the ideological infighting and divisiveness amongst religious scholars, Muslim students and activists. Therefore, this study is to provide an incisive answer to the question of the Muslim identity and the manifestations of Islamic resurgence in Thailand in the globalisation era. It is an endeavour to examine the Muslim society of Thailand by focusing on Islamic resurgence in the context of globalisation in order to obtain a holistic understanding on the nature and effects of Islamic resurgence in Thailand.

1.3 Research Questions

As a guide to the study on the Muslim society of Thailand, three research questions were formulated:

RQ1: How did the Muslim society of Thailand develop along with the formation of Thai Muslim identity?

RQ2: How has the Islamic tradition in Thailand been shaped by the growing Islamic consciousness under the conditions of globalisation?

RQ3: How does Islamic resurgence affect the development of Muslim civil society in Thailand?

1.4 Research Objectives

The main purpose of the present study is to obtain a holistic understanding on the Muslim society in Thailand by focusing on the growth of transnational Islamic consciousness. The overall quest of the research project can be formulated as follows:

RO1: To investigate the historical background of Muslim society in Thailand and the formation of their identity.

RO2: To understand the manifestations of Islamic resurgence in Thailand and highlight the effects from globalisation.

RO3: To discern connections between the growing Islamic consciousness and the Muslim civil society in Thailand.

1.5 Research Methodology

To achieve the determined objectives, the study employs library-based research methodology. Sources of data include books, periodicals, theses,

dissertations, journal articles, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, research reports, commentaries, newspapers, websites, and blogs. Interviews are also used for acquiring information that cannot be obtained in literary forms. Content analysis of documents is performed to reveal non-intrusive form of contents and theme.

1.5.1 Conceptual Framework

There are two core concepts that underpin the present study: (i) the concept of globalisation as established by Roland Robertson, and (ii) the concept of Islamic resurgence in a globalising world. These two concepts are explained briefly as follows:

Roland Robertson defines globalisation as a concept that “refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole”.¹⁴ What makes it distinct from other scholars’ definitions seems to be its duality of objective and subjective processes. Its former component, viz., social compression of the world, is viewed historically as a centuries-old phenomenon where the increase in human interconnections and international relations is the hallmark. What is far more relevant to the recent situation of world experience seems to be the latter part of the definition. It is the idea of an intensification of global consciousness, that is, the consciousness by individuals of the global situation.¹⁵ In other words, what is central to the concept of globalisation according to this perspective is its cognitive aspect, i.e. global consciousness.

14. Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992), 8.

15. Jonathan Friedman, *Cultural Identity and Global Process* (London: SAGE Publication, 1994), 196.

Chandra Muzaffar conceives of the phenomenon of Islamic resurgence as “the endeavour to re-establish Islamic values, Islamic practices, Islamic institutions, Islamic laws, indeed Islam in its entirety, in the lives of Muslims everywhere”¹⁶. It is a striking coincidence that by the time the world is becoming a global community of human beings, an overwhelming current of religious revivalism emerges as a by-product of the lengthy process of modernisation. Especially in the Muslim world, such trends are taking shape and become one of the alternative solutions for curing all calamities that human beings were enduring from the failure of the West-engineered modernisation. Finding new ways to maximize the audience for missionary campaigns, Islamist movements carry the message of Islamic resurgence to Muslim masses beyond geo-political boundaries, thereby cultivating the Islamic consciousness in all societies across the globe.

In this regard, inevitably affected is the identity of Muslims. Global consciousness reproduces to the Muslim intellectuals a peculiar notion; that is, the awareness to bridge the gap of inherited cultures, political differences, etc. for the integration of all Muslim communities. The feeling that all individuals make up a single *ummah* is deliberately inculcated into Muslim masses through Islamic propagation campaigns, which mushrooms in every corner of Muslim society. Those attempts do not eradicate all components that form national identity nor dissolve them into the mainstream “Islamic *ummah*.” Rather, they try to reshape the national identity and transform its contents so that each Muslim society will constitute a member of the Muslim *ummah*. In other words, collective identity of Muslim society is being shaped by the reassertion of Islam for the purpose of integration to the global

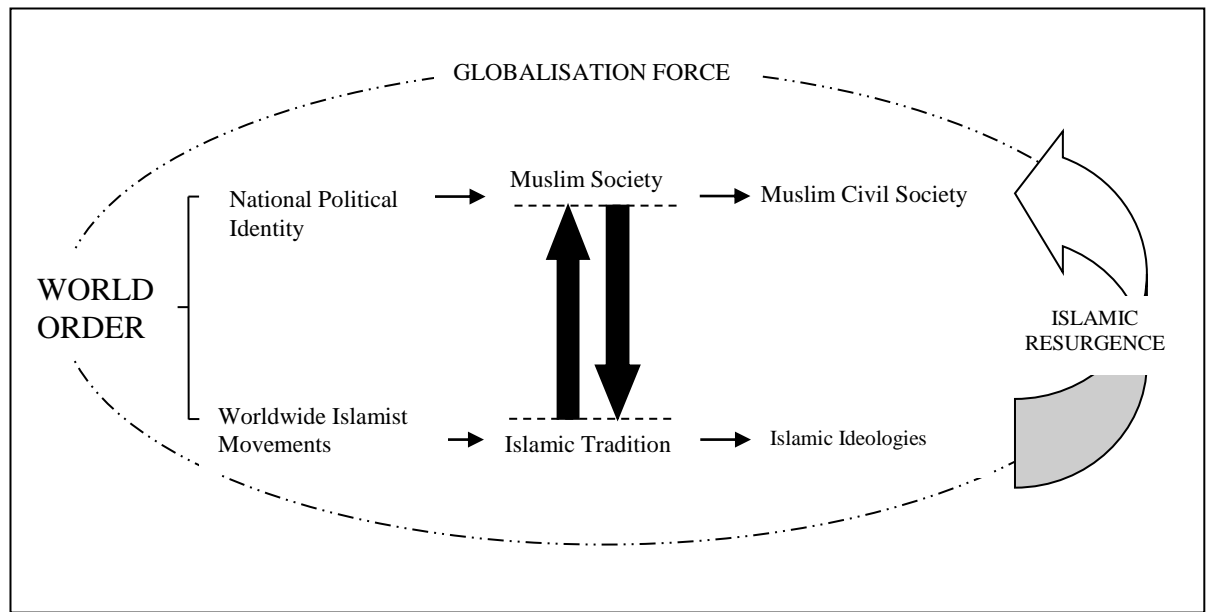
16. Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia* (Shah Alam: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1987).

ummah. This explains the reason why the Islamic awakening campaigns often go hand in hand with calling for unity amongst Muslim societies all over the world.

On the other hand, the emerging Muslim civil society plays a key role in the growing consciousness of Muslim masses to practice Islam and express their Islamic identity in public. The use of media by Muslim organisations to disseminate their attitudes, ideas, positions, etc. is viewed as pointing to the contribution they make on the globalising flow of Islamic consciousness. Therefore, the growing consciousness of Islamic resurgence has benefitted from the process of globalisation and, in return, empowered local societies to become part of the globalising force.

In short, Islamic resurgence in the globalisation era on a twofold process, i.e. Muslim society is not only impacted by globalisation as reflected in the drastic spread of Islamic ideologies on a world scale and the changing attitude towards the Muslim self and Islamic *ummah*, but also taking part in the globalising flow by localising those ideologies and expressing them through the activities of Muslim civil society. This can be illustrated in the following diagram:

Figure 1.5: The interplay between Islamic civilisation and the dominant world order



1.5.2 Scope of the Study

The study aims to probe into the historical background of Muslim society in Thailand, the formation of Muslim identity, transnational Islamic ideologies and their development in Muslim society of Thailand, and finally the Muslim civil society in Thailand and its use of media resources for the sake of Islamic propagation. These issues comprise the stories on the Muslim society of Thailand in the wake of Islamic resurgence.

1.6 Literature Review

Although academic works on Muslim society in Southeast Asia are in abundance, there are a very few that try to find answers to the questions of expressions of Islamic consciousness in the Muslim society of Thailand as a whole, especially with balanced attention given beyond regional and cultural borders. Despite having scarce literatures on Thai Islam, I have discovered a number of

studies that are helpful in forming the background of the present study. This section presents the summary of the previous studies with emphasis on identity, ideology, and activism of the Muslim society in Thailand.

Raymonds Scupin examines Muslim society in Bangkok in his Ph.D. thesis, *Thai Muslims in Bangkok: Islam and Modernization in a Buddhist Society* (1978). The context of modernisation of the capital city intrigued him to study Islam as a religious tradition in Bangkok. The study investigates the origins of Muslims in Bangkok and their living conditions. It documents the factionalised religious conflicts between traditional Islam and Islamic reformism within Islamic communities. Scupin emphasised the matters that puritanical reformists strived to eliminate from Muslims' practices. The reformist views regarding the socio-political issues, e.g. modernisation, Muslim political involvement, modern Islamic education etc. are clarified.¹⁷

Panomporn Anurugsa conducted a Ph.D. dissertation on political integration policy imposed on Malay Muslims in Southern Thailand, entitled *Political Integration Policy in Thailand: The Case of the Malay Muslim Minority* (1984). It focuses on methods and strategies of the past governments in political integration, aiming at creating national loyalty in the Malay Muslim minority. The study details the ways in which Malay Muslims in the Deep South were unsuccessfully assimilated. Policy on the *pondok* education was among other actions that the

17. Scupin, "Thai Muslims in Bangkok: Islam and Modernisation in a Buddhist Society."

nationalist governments took to integrate the Muslim South into Modern Thailand.¹⁸

Asst. Prof. Sawvanee Jitmoud conducted a research entitled, *Ethnic Group: Thai Muslim* (1988). The study examined the Muslim society of Thailand in terms of culture. Historical origins, fundamental beliefs and rituals, and roles of Muslims in the glory of the Thai nation in the past form the first chapters of the research report. According to Jitmoud, assimilation policy and the Thai nationalism are linked to the local unrests in the Deep South.¹⁹

Prayunsak Chalayondecha conducted a study, entitled *Muslims in Thailand* (1996), emphasising the origins of different ethnic groups of Muslim settlers who were later incorporated to Thai citizenry. The first half of his work is dedicated to tracing the history of the entry of Islam into Thailand and the roles of Muslim aristocrats in the court of Siam. In the latter half, Chalayondecha quotes laws and official guidelines pertaining to Muslim minority and Islamic affairs in Thailand.²⁰

Assoc. Prof. Rattiya Saleh conducted a study entitled *The Interaction among Religious Adherents as Found in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat Provinces* (2001). It was an attempt to principally study the process of interaction and accommodation between the Muslim adherents and their Buddhist counterparts in the Deep South with emphasis on the possibility of applying the cultural dynamics to development. It examines the interaction of Malay Muslims with the Buddhists through daily

18. Panomporn Anurugsa, "Political Integration Policy in Thailand: The Case Study of the Malay Muslim Minority" (Ph.D Thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 1984).

19. Sawvanee Jitmoud, *Klum Chatiphan: Thai Muslim (Ethnic Group: Thai Muslim)* (Bangkok: Sa-nga Rujira Amporn Fund, 1988).

20. Prayunsak Chalayondecha, *Muslim nai prathet Thai (Muslims in Thailand)* (Bangkok: Sultan Suleiman Central Islamic Library Project, 1996).

activities.²¹

Michel Gilquin did well when he examined the present impasse of the Muslim society of Thailand by giving weight to the history of Islam in Thailand and the effects of modernity and globalisation on the Muslim segments. Gilquin's *The Muslims of Thailand* (2005) was distinct in his use of the local English newspaper articles and anecdotal stories as sources of data, i.e. *The Nation* and *Bangkok Post*. He argues that the reaffirmation of Islamic identity in Thailand has two characteristics: it is part of the global movements of the Muslim world in which Muslims reposition themselves in the face of secular marginalisation of religion; and it is a manifestation of the minority fear to be overwhelmed in religious terms by the other-dominated environment.²²

Gilquin echoes that the modern Muslims face the dilemma of Muslim identity and Thai patriotism, nonetheless paying minimal attention to the ideological struggle within the community. He views the confrontation between Salafī reformists and the conservatives, which can be seen as constituting the renewal of Islam in Thailand, as “the commitment of Thai Muslim society to modernity”²³. The author predicates that the revival in religious observance is due to “a better knowledge of religious texts brought about by modern communication techniques and encouraged by improvement in the levels of education”.²⁴

21. Rattiya Saleh, “Karn patisamphan rawang satsanik thi prakod nai changwat Pattani, Yala lae Narathiwat (The Interaction among Religious Adherents as Found in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat Provinces)” (The Thailand Research Fund (TRF), 2001).

22. Michel Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005), 101.

23. Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand*, 116.

24. Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand*, 25.

The author looks into the official institution of Islam in Thailand, represented by Chula Rajamontri and the National Council of Islamic Affairs, and gives marginal interest to Muslim associations outside the state framework. He maintains that the interpretation of the official Islamic body being challenged is due to “the weakening of traditional social norms” that led to “a more personal interpretation of sacred texts.”²⁵ The increasing roles of Muslim politicians in national politics are viewed as complementary to Chula Rajamontri and his subordinate staff in representing the Muslim minority and voicing their demands.

Imtiyaz Yusuf explores the tapestry of Islam in Thailand with special emphasis on the Southern Thai crisis. His *Faces of Islam in Southern Thailand* (2007) argues that the root cause of the crisis is in the alteration of the role of religion by the import of resurgent Islam into the country. He views the changed formula of Muslim identity, i.e. the blending of ethno-religious constructs, as the crux of the problem. The author concludes that the upsurge of Islamic consciousness in forms of political active force, sometimes militant, in other Muslim countries has made three notable developments in Muslim society of Thailand. They are: setting off the process of purifying folk Islam along the puritanical lines, radicalising Thai Islam in general, and giving religious colouring to the ethnic crisis in the Deep South.²⁶

In his research project, Imtiyaz Yusuf studies the dialectic relations between official Islam and the unofficial readings of Islamic texts. The role of the state-backed religious institutions in aligning Thai Islam with the authority is contrasted to

25. Gilquin, *The Muslims of Thailand*, 44.

26. Imtiyaz Yusuf, “Faces of Islam in Southern Thailand,” *East-West Center Working Papers*, Access Date 2007, 2, www.eastwestcenter.org/fileadmin/stored/pdfs/EWCWwp007.pdf.

the discrete struggles on the path to resistance. Concerning the restive South, the author mentions the role played by the office of Chula Rajamontri in shunning the secessionist claims to justify jihadist attacks on the Buddhists. He also points out to Dr Ismail Lutfi Chapakiya, the rector of Yala Islamic University and the moderate reformist icon, for his opposition to separatism and his choice to take pro-dialogue stand with the authority. Furthermore, the author considers the initiatives of Wahdah faction to forge a powerful alliance of Muslim members of Parliament for better representation of the Muslim benefits.

In light of the previous works, we found that most researches on the subject of Muslims in Thailand do not address the ideas of Islamic reformism. Although all of these works attempt to find out about Muslims in Thailand, there has not been a single study in which Islamic resurgence in Thailand is examined in the context of globalisation.

Anugruga's work is politically oriented while Saleh's study does not deal with Islamic concepts. Chalayondecha's and Jitmoud's works are historically oriented giving little heed to Islamic traditions in the wake of change. Scupin's work is interesting for its focus on the religious conflict that tore apart Muslim societies into factions, but it is out-dated and does not reflect the changes that the present-day world is experiencing. Yusuf's project is admirable due to the analysis of Islamic tendencies. However, due to his emphasis on Southern Thailand on account of Islamic resurgence, the ramifications of Islamic revolution regarding Thai Muslim society is ruled out. In regards to Gilquin's work, it is also striking in its use of newspaper articles to project the picture of Muslims in Thailand. Yet, the scope of literature is still limited as Thai language is foreign to Gilquin.

Therefore, the present thesis attempts to examine the Muslim society of Thailand in the context of globalisation by making use of publications and websites in Thai language as the sources of data to demonstrate Islamic resurgence in Thailand in the globalisation era.

1.7 Definition of Terminology

Some of the central terms used in the formulation of research questions and objectives deserve a closer look to clarify their intended meaning in this thesis. The meaning of the terms becomes more sophisticated in the following chapters but a brief and informal outline is given here to facilitate basic understanding.

1.7.1 Globalisation is taken to refer to the unprecedented interconnection of humankind on the global scale and the intensification of the global consciousness, as a consequence of the force of capitalist economy and the advanced technology of mass communication.

1.7.2 Islamic resurgence can be thought as the growth of Islamic consciousness and the expression of Islamic piety in the public sphere on massive scales. Islamic awakening and reassertion of Islamic values are also used to suggest the same phenomenon with slightly different places of emphasis.

1.7.3 Muslim identity refers to the self-conception of a Muslim individual as a member of Muslim society. It is a subjective property that connects the individual to the collective and determines the framework of relations within and across the group.

1.7.4 **Islamic ideology** is taken to mean a set of key concepts based on a specific philosophy, having unique characteristics, and operating towards identified objectives within the framework of Islamic tenets. Its basic ideas are retrieved from the repositories of Islamic normative standards and crystallised over the lengthy process of revival and reforms within Islam.

1.7.5 **Muslim civil society** is used in this study in two contexts. In its primary meaning, Muslim civil society refers to the sphere of voluntary collective action taken by Muslim activists, associations, organisations, charitable networks etc. based on shared purposes and ideological strategies to bring to the Muslim society collective piety and justice. In the final analysis, the abstract meaning of the term pertains; Muslim civil society as the one in which liberal values such as freedom, religious tolerance, human rights, non-violent approach to conflict solution, pluralistic worldview etc. prevail. Therefore, Muslim civil society is emerging as the new competitive civilisational format on a par with the development of Islamic thoughts and its intellectual accomplishments.

1.8 Organisation of Thesis

The main body of the thesis consists of five chapters. With the exception of the first and the final chapters, the purpose of the individual chapters is to contribute to answering the research questions. How each chapter contributes to addressing the research question is outlined below, in addition to the main contents of each chapter.

Chapter 1 presents the framework of the study, including background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, research methodology, review of related literature, definition of terminology, and organisation

of the thesis.

Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of the origins of Muslim society in Thailand and the development of Thai Muslim identity. It presents a discussion on the arrival of Islam and the emergence of Muslim society in Thailand. It gives a picture of the formation of Thai Muslim identity under the conditions of pre-modern Siam and of democratic Thailand.

Chapter 3 assesses the Islamic tradition in Thailand in the wake of the influx in resurgent currents of thought. It looks into the normative tradition of revival and reform in Islam and the development of reformist ideas across the sectarian divides. It also outlines the defining characteristics of each ideological orientation for better conception of the reformist ideas which are circulated in the Muslim society of Thailand. The spectrum of Islamic discourse, ranging from the most radical to the most liberal, that propels Islamic resurgence in Thailand is described.

Chapter 4 explores the roles of Muslim civil society in contributing to the growth of Islamic consciousness and promoting civic values among the Muslim masses. It examines the concept of civil society and its compatibility with the Islamic tradition. It investigates how the increasing consciousness of aspirational piety leads to the vibrancy of Islamic activism in Thailand. It further discusses whether the Islamic propagation strengthens pluralist, inclusive attitudes or gives rise to the process that arouses the antipathy and distaste of other sections of the Muslim society and the non-Muslims.

Chapter 5 summarises the findings and claimed contributions to the field, revisits the research objectives and questions and suggests alternative paths for